A

PARTICULAR ACCOUNT,

BOTH OF THE

Private and Public Behaviour

OF

WILLIAM ALEXANDER,

WHILE IN

PRISON, *and at the Place of* EXECUTION,

TOGETHER WITH

STRIKING SAYINGS AND REMARKS

On the Occurrences of his awful Exit.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

The PRAYER *he used the Morning before he was Executed, and the* HYMNS *sung on the Occasion.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A Particular Account, &c.

ON Monday, Nov. 17th. 1783, purſuant to his ſentence at the laſt aſſizes, for a forgery on the Tyne Bank, Newcaſtle, WILLIAM ALEXANDER was executed on the Town Moor, near that place. The priſoner in the beginning of his confinement, had but deſpairing thoughts of his ſalvation, and very dark and gloomy views of the ſcheme of divine mercy through Jeſus Chriſt; but his deſpair vaniſhed as the comfortable views of truth made their way into his mind.—In proportion as the riches of Grace appeared to the chief of ſinners, his mind became more and more ſettled, and the more he read the Scriptures of truth, the more was he confirmed of his ſalvation. Among human helps he found in Dr. Doddrige's Riſe and Progreſs of Religion in the Soul, ſeveral uſeful things to ſhow him the evil and demerit of ſin. Some other little tracts he read occaſionally, ſuch as Newton's life, written by himſelf,—Curate of Olney,—Colonel Gardiner's Life, by Dr. Doddridge,——Allen's Alarm,—Some of Hervey's Tracts, and particularly his letter to two criminals in the like ſituation. This ſeems to have been a favourite piece, as he has copied it over ſeveral times in his own hand writing. But the Scriptures were his principal ſtudy, and he learned his religion from the fountain head. As his time was ſhort he was urged to this by thoſe clergymen who attended him.

The following anecdote is among the firſt proofs of a reſigned mind which he diſcovered during his confinement. ——He was ſeized with the epidemical diſtemper that raged ſome time ago. Dr. ROTHERAM, whoſe humanity is never wanting to alleviate diſtreſs, and comfort the miſerable, viſited him in the jail, and preſcribed for him.——" He ſaid he would ſubmit to any preſcriptions he ſhould think proper.—He had not long to live; but he thought it his duty to uſe every mean to preſerve a life no longer his own, but his country's; that it might be employed for the purpoſes his fellow citizens had determined "

On the day of his execution he ſhewed that he had not read in vain. He behaved both in private and public in a way, that gave univerſal ſatisfaction, and afforded ſtrong proofs

proofs of a penitent mind. In the morning he was employed in private devotions with the Rev. Mr Brown of St. John's, ordinary of the Jail, and the Rev. Mr Grant, diſſenting miniſter in the Groat-market Meeting. From the choice of ſelect portions of ſcripture, which he made himſelf, and the hymns, which he pointed out, he ſatisfied all preſent, that he enjoyed that hope and peace of conſcience through the Blood of the Croſs, which can alone enable the Chriſtian to die with becoming compoſure. His remarks in priſon were ſuitable and ſtriking; and inſtead of ſtanding in need of conſolatory advice, he aimed at inſpiring every one around him with courage.

When the cords were brought to bind him, and after his laſt private offices had been done, he walked a croſs the room, and turning with a ſatisfaction marked on his countenance, he ſaid, "You ſee me here bound, and bound over to death; but I declare I never felt ſo free, and was never more alive! God knows I have been more fettered and harder bound when ſitting at the head of a full table, and enjoying outward proſperity!"——The ſheriff did him the honour to wait on him in the forenoon, as well as ſome other reſpectable characters in town. His interview with the ſheriff was particularly manly and reſigned. He told him, he was now at his call.—That he took this opportunity of declaring to him as the officiating magiſtrate,—"That he ſubmitted to his awful ſituation,—not becauſe he was compell'd to do it; but from a ſenſe of duty to his God, and to his Country. Providence had determined it, and he revered its deſigns.—The laws of his country had declared him unworthy to live, and he was now fully prepared to die: For he now had new and different views of death and of life, of earth and of heaven, from whatever he had entertained." As ſoon as the orders of the ſheriff reached him, he came down to the coach, that had been provided for him by the humane indulgence of the ſheriff, and ſtepped into it with great firmneſs and compoſure. He read by the way ſome ſelect paſſages of ſcripture, which had given him comfort, during his confinement, all written in his own hand——The two clergymen read alternately ſome devotional pieces to him, (ſee the hymns ſubjoined) and ſuggeſted ſeveral conſolatory thoughts. He breathed out now and then while in the carriage, and when left to himſelf, ſome ejaculations which came evidently from the heart. When the coach reached the fatal ſpot, he looked out with a ſmile on his countenance to the multitude. When he ſaw the tree, his countenance changed a little; the Rev. Mr Grant on

ſeeing

seeing this, suggested a thought to him that seemed to give him much composure, "If there were as vast a multitude of angels waiting to receive him into the other world, as there were of his fellow creatures and fellow sinners, witnessing his exit out of this, he would be a happy man, and see life in the midst of death" He replied yes! he would! —yes! he would! Mr Grant then read at his desire one of the hymns, composed by the Church of Scotland, a paraphrase on 2. Tim. iv. 6. 7. 8. 18.

MY race is run; my warfare's o'er;
The solemn hour is nigh,
When, offered up to God, my soul
Shall wing its flight on high.

Henceforth there is laid up for me
A crown which cannot fade;
The righteous Judge at the last day
Shall place it on my head.

From ev'ry snare and evil work
His grace shall me defend,
And to his heav'nly kingdom safe
Shall bring me in the end.

After this the prisoner read himself the 53 chap. of Isaiah, and made suitable remarks out of the carriage windows to the people, and recommended this and every other portion of Scripture that refers to the sufferings of Christ; "for by his sufferings and death, said he, you and I can only be happy in death." He then desired the Rev. Mr Grant to pray. In the time of prayer he was observed to be deeply affected, and rose from his knees with all the comfort and courage of one that had nothing to fear from death. He stepped out of the carriage with much composure, and ascended the cart with that dignity and ease, which the Power of true Religion can alone inspire in the awful and labouring moments of nature. The Rev Mr Brown

Brown, ordinary of the Goal, accompanied him here, and conducted the laſt parts of his public devotion. The priſoner himſelf began with reading the 142 Hymn of the 2d Book of Dr Watts' Collection. This Hymn he always read with pleaſure in his private appartments, after it had been pointed out to him, and ſaw ſomething in it peculiarly ſuited to his caſe. It may be proper to ſubjoin it here, as the object and leading idea in it is the only foundation of a ſinner's comfort in life or at death.

NOT all the blood of beaſts
On Jewiſh altars ſlain,
Could give the guilty conſcience peace,
Or waſh away the ſtain.

But Chriſt, the heav'nly Lamb,
Takes all our ſins away;
A ſacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I ſtand
And there confeſs my ſin.

My ſoul looks back to ſee
The burdens thou didſt bear,
When hanging on the curſed tree;
And hopes her guilt was there.

Believing, we rejoice
To ſee the curſe remove;
We bleſs the Lamb with chearful voice,
And ſing his bleeding love.

After this was ſung, the Ordinary and he joined together in warm and fervent prayer. He then read his Dying Thoughts to the people, and addreſſed them with feeling and firmneſs, giving way now and then to the extemporary effuſions of the heart. His manner of doing it was ſuch as he wiſhed them to profit by what he ſaid; and every feature, motion, and expreſſion was decent and manly. He concluded the devotions at the place by a ſhort prayer himſelf, and commended his ſpirit to the God of all Mercy. The melancholy preparations did not diſmay him; he continued firm and undaunted to the laſt. He took an affectionate farewell of the Sheriff, Clergymen, and of the Multitude, and went into Eternity, in the belief of all who ſaw him, a penitent and happy man.

The body after hanging the uſual time, was cut down, put into a coffin, and carried to his late apartment in the jail; from whence it was taken on Wedneſday evening, and decently interred in St. Andrew's church yard; the entire ſervice being performed by the Rev. Mr Brown, and the funeral attended by the Sheriff, Dr. Rotheram, the Rev. Mr Grant, and Mr Thomas Harle.

The following paper was found among his extracts, as a favourite one, and ſhews on what good and ſolid foundation he reſted his hopes and happineſs, it being copied four times out among his papers left with Mr GRANT as a dying legacy.

"What is my hope with regard to my future "ſtate? I put my whole hope in the Lord Jeſus "Chriſt.—Should Satan accuſe me, I plead the "ſurety of the covenant, who took my guilt upon "himſelf, and bore my ſins on his own body.— "Should the law denounce a curſe, I appeal to "him who hung upon the accurſed tree, on pur"poſe that all the nations of the earth might be bleſſed

" bleſſed.—Should hell open its jaws and demand
" its prey, I look up to that gracious Being who
" ſays, 'deliver him from going down to the pit,
" for I have found a ranſom.'—Should it be ſaid,
" no unclean thing can enter into heaven, the
" blood of Chriſt cleanſeth from all ſin; though
" my ſins be as ſcarlet, yet his blood ſhall waſh
" them white as ſnow.—Should it be added, none
" can ſit down at the ſupper of the Lamb without
" a wedding garment, and my righteouſneſs is
" as filthy rags; I renounce all theſe and ſeek
" to be found in Chriſt Jeſus who is my righte-
" ouſneſs;—it is written, that by his obedience
" many ſhall be made righteous."

The PRAYER he uſed the Morning before he was executed, copied from his own Hand Writing.

O Thou ſupreme ruler of the viſible and and inviſible worlds, thou Sovereign of life, and of death, of earth, and of heaven; bow down thy gracious ear, O God! and let my prayer come before thee with acceptance.

The hour will ſoon come when thou wilt ſeparate me from this world and all its concerns, and remove me to another as yet unknown. Enable me, O moſt mighty Sovereign, by the aſſiſtance of thy divine ſpirit, to make the change as becomes one who is called of thee to receive an inheritance incorruptible and

and that fadeth not away. I acknowledge, O Lord, the juſtice of that ſentence by which I am to ſuffer; and own thy wiſdom and goodneſs in appointing it. Help me to turn it into the happy occaſion of honouring thee, and adorning the profeſſion of a Chriſtian; that I may glorify thee in the pangs of death when this body is diſſolved.

Gracious Father, I would not quit this world without my grateful acknowledgments to thee for all that abundant goodneſs which thou haſt cauſed to paſs before me. With my dying breath will I bear witneſs to thy faithful care. I thank thee, O my God, that this guilty, forfeited, unprofitable life, was ſo long ſpared. I thank thee for the mercies of my days which are now come to this period. I adore thy wonderful goodneſs that thou haſt taught me to throw myſelf intirely on the all ſufficiency of my Redeemer, for the riches of thy grace manifeſted in him, for his inſtructions and his example, for his blood and his righteouſneſs.

I bleſs thee, O God, that I am not dying in an unregenerated ſtate, but that thou didſt awaken and convince me. I thank thee for miniſters and their inſtructions. I thank thee for thy bleſſed word and for thoſe exceeding rich and precious promiſes of it; promiſes of ſupport in death, and of glory beyond it; and of the reſurrection of my body to everlaſting life. Cheer and ſupport me, O moſt

gracious

gracious God, in thoſe laſt extremities of expiring nature; add me to the happy number of thoſe who have been more than conquerors in death, and give me ſuch ſupplies of thy holy ſpirit, as will enable me to ſubmit with cheerfulneſs and reſignation to thy heavenly will.

O may I indeed preſume to ſay, I am accepted of thee; O may my ſins, numerous as they are, inflamed by every aggravating circumſtance, be had in remembrance no more. And, O God, now I am ſtanding on the borders of both worlds; now I view things as in the light of thy preſence, and of eternity; how unworthy do I appear that I ſhould be taken to dwell with angels and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect! Alas! I have reaſon to look back with deep humiliation on a poor unprofitable ſinful life: But O moſt adorable Majeſty, I come unto thee as a ſinner who believes in thy Son, for pardon and life, in him alone! I fall down before thee as a guilty and polluted wretch; but thou haſt made me rejoice that I am in the hands of the good ſhepherd.

O Lord, enable me to look down upon this world, which I am going to quit, and breath out my dying vows for its proſperity: I humbly beſeech thee that thou mayſt guard it, and make all who keep thy commandments the objects of thy peculiar care: bleſs the whole race of mankind; unite them more and more in the bonds of peace and charity.

And

And now, O God, bear me to the general aſſembly and church of the firſt born; to the innumerable company of angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect! And whatever this fleſh may ſuffer, let my ſteady ſoul be fixed on thee;—let faith perform its laſt offices in an honourable manner;—let my few remaining moments be ſpent for thy glory, and ſo let me aſcend with love in my heart, and praiſe on my faultering tongue, bleſſing and honour, glory and power, be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever, and ever. Amen.

MY thoughts ſurmount theſe lower ſkies,
And look within the veil;
There ſprings of endleſs pleaſure riſe
The waters never fail.

There I beheld, with ſweet delight,
The bleſſed Three in One;
And ſtrong affections fix my ſight
On God's incarnate Son.

His promiſe ſtands for ever firm,
His grace ſhall ne'er depart;
He binds my name upon his arm,
And ſeals it on his heart.

Light are the pains that nature brings;
How ſhort our ſorrows are,
When with eternal, future things,
The preſent we compare!

I would

I would not be a ſtranger ſtill
To that celeſtial place,
Where I for ever hope to dwell
Near my Redeemer's face.

THE hour of my departure's come;
I hear the voice that calls me home;
At laſt, O Lord! let trouble ceaſe
And let thy ſervant die in peace.

The race appointed I have run;
The combat's o'er; the prize is won.
And now my witneſs is on high,
And now my record's in the ſky.

Not in mine innocence I truſt;
I bow before thee in the duſt;
And thro' my Saviour's blood alone
I look for mercy at thy throne.

I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I held ſo dear;
To heal their ſorrows, Lord, deſcend
And to the friendleſs prove a friend.

I come, I come, at thy command,
I give my ſpirit to thy hand;
Stretch forth thine everlaſting arms,
And ſhield me in the laſt alarms!

The hour of my departure's come,
I hear the voice that calls me home:
Now, O my God! let trouble ceaſe,
Now let thy ſervant die in peace.

FINIS.